Hruska Wary of FBI Plan

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Sen. Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb.) expressed concern yesterday about a proposal by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take control of the day-to-day exchange of messages among the nation's police departments.

The proposal, which FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley made last July to then Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and again two months ago to Attorney General William B. Saxbe, was revealed in a General Accounting Office report to the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights.

Hruska, generally conservative on police-power matters, suggested that before making a decision Saxbe should await the outcome of congressional consideration of pending legislation to restrict the use and dissemination of crime data collected by local and state police and the FBI.

Perhaps, Hruska added, Congress, not Saxbe, should make the decision on whether the FBI should be allowed to expand its National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system to encompass the state and local police network, which is called NLETS—National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System.

Hruska's comments came during the subcommittee's opening hearing on two bills dealing with crime information. One bill was proposed by the Justice Department and introduced by Hruska; the other was introduced by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), subcommittee chairman.

The NCIC would be regulated under both bills because it maintans a data bank on wanted persons, stolen property, and computerized criminal history information that it exchanges with state and local Police.

NLETS has no data bank, and is merely a network used by state and local police to exchange such messages as checks on driver records, prisoner transfers and all-points Bulletins.

Questioned by Hruska, O. J. Hawkins, assistant director of the California Department of Justice and a member on the NCIC advisory board, admitted that the board is on record as favoring the takeover of the message-switching operation of NLETS.

The subcommittee is expected to ask Saxbe, who is to testify today, and Kelley, who is scheduled to testify Thursday, about the implications of the proposed takeover.